



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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29 July 2020

Hon. Jane Philpott
Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Director, School of Medicine
Decanal Office, Macklem House
Queen's University
18 Barrie Street
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

Dear Dr Philpott:

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and the merit principle in higher education. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

An article from Global News posted 24 July 2020 says that the undergraduate program Queen's University Accelerated Route to Medical School (QuARMS) will be restricted to Black and Indigenous students beginning the next application cycle. (<https://globalnews.ca/news/7215145/queens-university-medical-program-black-indigenous/>.) This program, begun in 2012, has to date been open to all high school graduates.

Students who complete the QuARMS program are accepted into the four-year MD program at the Queen's School of Medicine without first earning a bachelor's degree or writing the Medical College Admissions Test.

According to passages in the Global News article, restricting entrance to the program is intended 1) to "lessen the financial burden" on Black and Indigenous students, 2) to attract to Queen's "students from diverse backgrounds," and 3) eventually to increase the number of members of groups "very underrepresented in our medical schools."

But certainly not all Black or Indigenous students face greater than average financial burdens and many students of other races and ethnicities do face severe burdens. For that reason, scholarships based on family income would address the condition of poor students more directly.

One excellent way to help students manage costs would be to expand QuARMS so that more than ten students a year might save two years' worth of tuition. Indeed, if the program is successful in preparing students to take a place in medical school after only two years of undergraduate work, then requiring all other students keen on medical school to go the standard route is extremely wasteful.

The idea that restricting QuARMS to students of particular races or ethnicities will attract minority students suggests that Queen's has little otherwise to offer students. It also condescendingly suggests that Black and Indigenous students would rather choose a university because of the benefits set aside for them than because of the academic successes they anticipate from rising to academic challenges.

There is no reason to admit students into the QuARMS program or into medical school on the basis of race or ethnicity. Indeed, there are very strong reasons to ignore both race and ethnicity as an admission criterion: fairness to all applicants, competence of future doctors, and respect for Black and Indigenous people who deserve to be treated as students among all the other students and not given preference unattached to accomplishment.

We respectfully ask you to respond to our letter. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,



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